

HOUSING

The Borough Council's housing and planning policy objectives are aimed at ensuring that the housing needs and choices of the Borough's residents are met by facilitating the availability of a suitable range and standards of housing accommodation. Initiatives are being undertaken to encourage development by Housing Associations and the private sector, so as to widen the choice of new housing. Attention is also focussed on existing housing, through improvement grants and area initiatives, such as at Bessemer Park, Spennymoor, under the Government's Estate Action Programme.

Housing Development Trends

During the 1980s new housing provision in the Borough has been primarily through the private sector, accounting for 2,610 of the 2940 dwellings built between 1981 and 1991. Local Authority sponsored schemes have fallen dramatically in accordance with the policy of Central Government. Housing Association developments have provided some 160 dwellings (approximately 5%), mainly for aged persons' accommodation.

Since 1981 the Borough's housing stock has increased by 1,740 dwellings net to total 37,170 properties, after taking account of the demolition of some 1,200 dwellings. This represents an annual average building rate of 290 dwellings. Newton Aycliffe has accommodated 60% of new housing provision as the development of the town's Northern Area has continued. These development trends, assisted by the transfer of housing from the public to the private sector under the Right to Buy provisions, has produced a change in the pattern of housing tenure. In 1981, 39% of dwellings were privately owned; by 1991 this had increased to 58%.

This house-building activity, however, took place against a background of a fall in the Borough's population from 92,500 in 1981 to 90,500 in 1991. As such it reflects a trend towards smaller household sizes and a greater demand for owner occupation.

At April 1993 there was a wide variety of sites with planning permission in the Borough able to accommodate in the order of 1,710 dwellings. The majority of this provision is in Newton Aycliffe, but sites are available in all parts of the Borough.

On the basis of past development trends, this is equivalent to about a 6-year supply of land. A schedule of sites with planning permission for residential development as at April 1993 is set out in Appendix 3.

Planning Strategy

National and regional planning policy guidance advises that housing development should take place on environmentally acceptable sites in, or well related to towns and villages. This guidance will be reflected in the Review of the County Structure Plan, with a continuation of the present policy of accommodating housing around the County's main towns such as Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor. Such a development pattern recognises that these centres are where most of the County's residents live and opportunities for work, shopping and leisure are concentrated. It also serves to reduce the need for travel, promotes urban concentration and regeneration and protects open countryside areas.

The Local Plan's spatial strategy reflects these considerations, and is supported by the development strategy. This is aimed at promoting and facilitating development opportunities by maintaining a sufficient supply of land for housing development. The approach taken in

the Local Plan towards housing land is essentially land supply based (as opposed to being related to calculations of housing demand) and seeks to identify a range and choice of housing sites.

Housing Land Provision

This supply of land comprises sites throughout the Borough that are acceptable in planning policy and environmental terms, well related in scale and location to existing development, able to take advantage of existing services and infrastructure, and are attractive to potential occupiers and house-builders in both the private and social housing sectors.

The availability of this land should serve to stimulate development activity and help to sustain or regenerate many of the Borough's towns and villages.

However, in identifying this supply of land, the Borough's likely future population levels and characteristics have been taken into account. It is the responsibility of the County Durham Structure Plan to indicate the scale of housing provision that should be made in the Borough, but the present approved County Structure Plan covers only the period up to 1996. As such, appropriate guidance for the period of the Borough Local Plan will not be available until a review of the County Structure Plan is published. Some interim population projections based upon the 1991 Census have been prepared as part of the review process. These indicate that the Borough's population by the year 2006 will be around 95,000. This level of population will require the provision of 41,300 dwellings, compared with the 1991 stock of 37,200 dwellings; a net increase of 4,100.

A calculation of the Borough's net housing requirements based upon additional dwellings and taking account of existing planning permissions and housing provided between 1991 and 1993 is set out in Appendix 3, and summarised below:

Local Plan Housing Provision

(A) Housing Demand

Housing Requirement in the Borough 1991-2006	4,100	
Net Additional to Housing Stock 1991-1993	<u>500</u>	
	<u>3,600</u>	<u>3,600</u>

(B) Housing Land Supply

Sites with Planning Permission at April 1993 and number of dwellings estimated to come forward	1,380	
Windfall and Small Site Developments	720	
Future Demolitions 1993-2006	-340	
Land Allocated in Borough Local Plan	<u>2,240</u>	
	<u>4,000</u>	<u>4,000</u>

(C) Surplus Housing Land Supply 400

The additional supply of housing land above the housing requirement figure of 4,100 dwellings is equivalent to about a 11% over provision. This is considered to provide a reasonable level of flexibility, to take account of development constraints and to maintain a range and choice in the supply of land.

Distribution of Housing Land

In accordance with the urban concentration theme of the Plan, the majority of new housing provision is made in Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor. This maintains an urban focus, supports other policy approaches towards economic development, shopping, energy conservation and the environment and is consistent with the distribution of new housing completions in the Borough over the last five years.

Additional housing sites are being identified in Shildon and Ferryhill in support of this urban concentration theme, and to aid the continuing regeneration of these towns.

Outside of the Borough's four towns the housing allocations are smaller in scale and limited to villages with a reasonable range of services and facilities. An exception to this is at Winterton Hospital, near Sedgefield, where as part of the redevelopment of the hospital estate, some housing provision is anticipated. Through this approach a range in the choice and location of housing sites will be maintained in villages; it takes account of the differing requirements of various sections of the housing market and recognises the need to achieve a balance between the needs of conservation and encouraging house building.

A summary of the distribution of housing land in the Borough is set out on the following page:

Housing Expected to be Provided by Sites

	<i>With Planning Permissions</i>	<i>Allocated in the Local Plan</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Newton Aycliffe	860	490	1,350
Spennymoor	240	1,050	1,290
Sildon	30	160	190
Ferryhill	50	100	150
Rest of Borough	200	310	510
Winterton	<u>0</u>	<u>130</u>	<u>130</u>
TOTALS	<u>1,380</u>	<u>2,240</u>	<u>3,620</u>

Other Housing Policies

The other housing policies and proposals of the Local Plan are essentially concerned with:

- Encouraging as appropriate the re-use of derelict, vacant and underused land within towns and villages for housing purposes.
- Improving the environmental standards of existing and older housing so as to increase the overall attractiveness of the Borough as a place to live.
- Promoting a high quality of design and landscaping in housing schemes, at both the individual house and housing estate levels (see Design Chapter).

Housing Development in Town

POLICY H1 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ON SITES IN NEWTON AYCLIFFE, SPENNYMOOR, FERRYHILL AND SHILDON WILL NORMALLY BE APPROVED PROVIDED THAT THE SITE IS INCLUDED IN POLICY H2 OR:

- (A) IS EITHER SUBSTANTIALLY SURROUNDED BY HOUSING; OR**
- (B) DOES NOT LEAD TO AN EXTENSION OF DEVELOPMENT INTO THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE; AND**
- (C) DOES NOT PREJUDICE THE ENVIRONMENTAL RESTRAINT POLICIES OF THE PLAN; NOR**
- (D) CONFLICTS WITH DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR NEW HOUSING IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY D5.**

Reasons for the policy

The Plan's strategy to concentrate most new housing development in the four main towns, recognises that these centres are where most of the Borough's residents live and opportunities for work, shopping and leisure are concentrated. It also serves to reduce the need to travel, promotes urban concentration and regeneration and protects the open countryside.

The sites proposed for housing development in the main towns are listed in Policy H2. They provide for a wide range of locations for housing in the Borough and will help to attract people to live in this area.

There may, however, be other smaller sites (normally less than 0.5 ha.) that meet the criteria listed in the policy which could also be developed.

An acceptable site would need to be within the built up area of one of the four main towns. For a site to be considered to be substantially surrounded by housing it should have housing on at least two or three sides or not extend into the open countryside.

The Plan encourages housing development to make use of surplus or unused land within the urban framework released during the Plan period. Such sites that are not within an existing housing area would normally only be allowed in accordance with the policy on the layout of new housing development (Policy D5). The development of small sites should meet the criteria in the policy on backland and infill housing development (Policy H16).

Whereas the development of surplus land is encouraged, attention should be paid to Policies L5 and L11 which give guidance on the redevelopment or change of use of land or buildings no longer required for community use.

It is important that development does not have an adverse effect on the environment of these four towns and that the built up area is not over-developed. The policies in the Plan that give further guidance on protecting the environment are Policy E18 (Conservation Areas), Policy E19 (Listed Buildings), Policy E17 (Archaeologically important sites), Policy E4 (Green Wedges), Policy E16 (Agricultural Land), Policies E10, E11 and E12 (Sites of Nature Conservation Interest), Policy E15 (Trees).

All housing developments should be laid out and designed in accordance with the relevant general principles set out in the Design Chapter and have regard to the requirements for open space provision set out in Policy L1. Further advice is also contained in a series of Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY H2 LAND IS ALLOCATED FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS:

LOCATION	AREA (HA)	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF DWELLINGS
NEWTON AYCLIFFE		
AGNEW 5	2.8	70
HAWKSHEAD PLACE	1.3	40
SCOTT PLACE	1.4	40
ELDON WHINS	8.0	160
BURN LANE	1.1	20
BRUCE ROAD	0.6	20
SHERATON ROAD	1.5	45
EQUESTRIAN CENTRE	5.1	100
SPENNYMOOR		
BESSEMER PARK	0.7	20
GRAYSON ROAD (PHASE 1)	3.6	90
GRAYSON ROAD (PHASE II)	8.8	80
WHITWORTH PARK	58.8	700
YORK HILL ROAD	6.4	160
SHILDON		
ALMA ROAD	0.7	15
REDWORTH ROAD	3.1	80
ELDON BANK TOP	2.6	65
FERRYHILL		
DEAN ROAD	8.0	100

Reasons for the policy

The identification of housing sites has been determined using the following criteria: relationship to areas of existing development, satisfactory access arrangements, availability of utility services, proximity to community facilities such as shops and schools, proximity to public transport routes and impact on the local landscape, agricultural land and neighbouring

areas. Account has also been given to the range and choice of sites being identified and their attractiveness to developers.

The sites identified in the policy satisfy these criteria and considerations. Alternative sites are not thought to be as satisfactory, or are allocated for other uses.

The housing land identified in Newton Aycliffe recognises the economic development importance and environmental attractiveness of the town. The sites allocated will allow for the continuing planned development of the town and amounts to land for 495 dwellings. It should be noted that housing on a part of the Equestrian Centre site will be allowed only subject to a planning agreement (Policy H6), and that the approval of the Eldon Whins site is subject to a phasing policy (Policy H7).

Spennymoor has the potential for further development in terms of employment, housing and shopping which would help to promote the town's role as a major centre in the county and safeguard existing private and public investment in the town centre. The Local Plan therefore allocates a level of housing land able to accommodate 1,050 dwellings that should encourage an increase in house building over that of recent years.

Housing at Whitworth Park, Spennymoor, will only be allowed as part of a comprehensive development scheme that includes leisure, nature conservation and open space uses as detailed in Policy H4.

Land at Grayson Road involves two phases. The second phase is the subject of a phasing policy (Policy H5), that links the release of this area to satisfactory progress being achieved in the development of the comprehensive proposals for the Whitworth Park housing area.

In Shildon and Ferryhill, the Local Plan's aim is to ensure that these centres can retain stable populations and that there exists a supply of available housing land at least consistent with recent development trends. In Shildon particularly, attention is given to the stimulation of private sector development interest by specific new land allocations. Land for a total of 160 houses is allocated.

An analysis of possible sites for housing development in Ferryhill, taking account of the criteria set out above, identifies land to the south of the town (east of the A167) as the most appropriate location for further housing land releases. Development of 100 dwellings to the south of Dean Road is proposed, served by an improved access road (Gordon Terrace). Further development in this location will require the construction of a link road from the A167 with other attendant highway works and structural landscaping to establish a strong southern limit to development.

Developers of these sites will be required to have regard to policies H19 and H20 concerning the variety and sizes of dwellings to be provided, including the provision of affordable and special needs housing. Policy D5 sets out criteria governing the layout of housing developments. Policy D7 identifies those sites where structural landscaping should be included as part of the development.

The total number of dwellings on each site (and therefore the total in each town) will depend on the density and type. Proposals should take account of the policies or general design principles in the Design Chapter, particularly Policy D5 on the layout of new housing development. Development will be expected to be of a high standard with, for example, provision of structural landscaping in accordance with Policy D7. Opportunities should be taken to create areas of nature conservation interest and preserve existing natural features in accordance with Policy E13.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

Providing advice to developers, and by the preparation of planning briefs.

The Borough Council making sites available through its Housing Land Release Programme.

Monitoring the rate of housing completions. The Plan will be kept under review in order to ensure that there is at least a 5 year supply of readily available land for housing development in accordance with PPG3 - Housing.

POLICY H3 SHOULD THE EXISTING PERMISSION FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT LAPSE ON SITES, PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NORMALLY BE RENEWED PROVIDED THAT THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT CONFORMS WITH OTHER POLICIES OR PROPOSALS OF THE PLAN.

Reasons for the policy

The supply of housing land in the Borough includes sites which have planning permission. At April 1993, sites with planning permission, but where development had not yet started, were able to accommodate some 1,710 dwellings. In order to maintain the availability of these sites, planning permission will normally be renewed for housing on these sites where permission has lapsed unless there have been material changes to justify refusal of permission.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY H4 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN THE WHITWORTH PARK AREA OF SPENNYMOOR WILL BE GRANTED PERMISSION ONLY AS PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING SCHEME FOR THE AREA SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP AND WHICH PROVIDES FOR THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

- (A) AN 18 HOLE GOLF COURSE;**
- (B) SAFEGUARDING OF NATURE CONSERVATION INTERESTS;**
- (C) IMPROVED PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE;**
- (D) LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENT;**
- (E) PROTECTION OF THE REMAINING OPEN LAND; AND**
- (F) COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

Reasons for the policy

The Local Plan aims to provide an attractive range of sites for housing development in Spennymoor in order to regenerate the town. Part of the site at Whitworth provides a major development opportunity and will be of benefit to the town by widening the range of housing choice. The policy will also, through its comprehensive approach to the wider area, provide for the conservation and enhancement of areas of nature conservation interest and landscape importance, improvement of public access to the countryside and secure the development of an eighteen hole golf course.

The housing component of the proposal will be restricted to that part of the site west of Carr Lane, north of the dismantled railway and south and east of Burton Beck so as not to prejudice the special landscape, nature conservation and leisure interests of the wider site area.

A major part of this area is moderate quality land and includes the site of a former colliery, though some Grade 3A land will be included in the development. Consultations will continue to take place with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to take account of agricultural interests in the development of the policy for the overall Whitworth area.

Around 700 houses could be accommodated in the area immediately to the west of Carr Lane. Attention will need to be given to the distribution of the housing to take account of the site's setting in the wider landscape and to accommodate open space areas that will separate individual housing areas. In the northern part of the site careful attention will be given to the relationship between areas of landscape and nature conservation importance, golf course fairways and housing. The housing development will generally be of a low density (approximately 10 houses per hectare). In the remainder of the area housing will be permitted at a higher density of development (approximately 25 houses per hectare).

The housing development in this location is well related to the existing built up area of Spennymoor and to the town centre, as well as local schools and other community facilities.

In accordance with Policy T7, improvement to the local road network, including traffic management measures, will need to be made in order that traffic from the housing areas does not cause adverse environmental or highway safety conditions. Appropriate provision will also need to be made for open space areas in accordance with Policy L2 and community facilities in accordance with Policy D8.

The landscape qualities of the Whitworth area will be protected and enhanced. Part of the area is within the important River Wear Valley Area of Landscape Value (see Policy E1) and the Whitworth Hall area is designated as a conservation area, in part to recognise the historic landscape character of the area. Additional tree planting related to the golf course and in connection with other proposals will serve to enhance and improve the appearance and environmental quality of the area, that has in the past been subject to opencast coal working. Nature conservation interests will be protected through measures to safeguard the Rosa Shafto Nature Reserve and areas of mature woodland. Improvements to public access in the area will be sought to facilitate greater informal recreational opportunities by enhancement of the existing network of public footpaths and by the development of new routes, including a connection from Carr Lane to the River Wear, as set out in Policy L10.

How it will be put into practice

An environmental appraisal will be required prior to agreeing a detailed planning brief for this site so as to ensure that it is developed to a high standard respecting the natural features of the site, and that a co-ordinated development package resulting in a mix of uses, including a golf course, nature conservation and countryside recreation is achieved as well as the housing.

A planning scheme covering the site will be agreed through negotiating with the developer prior to the granting of planning permission.

POLICY H5 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT GRAYSON ROAD (PHASE II), SPENNYMOOR WILL BE APPROVED PROVIDED THAT 65 DWELLINGS HAVE BEEN COMMENCED WITHIN PHASE I, AND 400 DWELLINGS HAVE BEEN COMMENCED IN THE WHITWORTH PARK AREA, SPENNYMOOR UNDER POLICY H4

Reasons for the policy

The Local Plan aims to provide an attractive range of sites for housing development in Spennymoor in order to help regenerate the town. Development at Grayson Road will contribute towards this, being integrated with the existing pattern of development and near to schools and other local facilities.

An important element in this regeneration strategy is the successful promotion of the comprehensive planning scheme for the Whitworth Park area (Policy H4) involving housing, an 18 hole golf course and the safeguarding of nature conservation and landscape interests. In view of this, the release of further land at Grayson Road (i.e. Phase II) will be dependent upon firstly the commencement of 65 dwellings within the Phase I site area and secondly the commencement of 400 dwellings at Whitworth Park. It is expected that when this amount of housing is provided the other elements of the comprehensive scheme will have been secured, including the 18 hole golf course.

It is estimated that some 80 of the 220 dwellings associated with the Phase II area, might be developed during the Plan period.

Housing development trends in the Whitworth Park area will be carefully monitored to ensure that the supply of housing land in Spennymoor is maintained.

Provision will need to be made for safe access to the site from Grayson Road for both Phase I and Phase II in accordance with Policy T7. Structural landscaping (Policy D7) will assist in defining the limits of development to the area allocated.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

Monitoring housing developments at the Whitworth Park and Grayson Road (Phase I) sites.

POLICY H6 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT THE AYCLIFFE EQUESTRIAN CENTRE, NEWTON AYCLIFFE, WILL BE APPROVED ONLY AS PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING SCHEME FOR THE AREA SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP AND WHICH PROVIDES FOR THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

- (A) THE EXISTING PLANNING PERMISSION FOR USE OF OTHER PARTS OF THE SITE FOR LARGE SCALE EQUESTRIAN EVENTS TO BE RELINQUISHED;**
- (B) THE EXISTING BUILDINGS, IF RETAINED, ARE USED FOR COMMUNITY, LEISURE OR RECREATIONAL PURPOSES WHICH DO NOT ATTRACT LARGE AMOUNTS OF TRAFFIC;**
- (C) THE REST OF THE SITE REMAINS UNDEVELOPED AND IS USED FOR PURPOSES COMPATIBLE WITH THE GREEN WEDGE POLICY OF THIS PLAN (POLICY E4), WITH A PREFERENCE FOR SOME LOCAL EQUESTRIAN FACILITIES;**
- (D) THE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT INCORPORATES A TURNING FACILITY FOR STAG LANE; AND**
- (E) ACCESS FROM THE A167 TO THE SITE IS PHYSICALLY STOPPED UP.**

Reasons for the policy

There are currently several planning problems surrounding the Aycliffe Equestrian Centre: the access along Stag Lane is inadequate for events involving large numbers of vehicles; the Department of Transport does not wish to see any access to the site from the A167; Stag Lane does not have a turning head; the Equestrian Centre buildings are not complete; and the site is not being used for the purpose for which it was intended. This policy provides the basis for an agreement with a developer and the landowner to overcome these problems.

Only a small part of the site (5.1 hectares which comprises the area of built development and the car parks to the west of Woodham Burn) is considered to be suitable for housing development if the green setting of this part of the town is not to be prejudiced as set out in the policy on green wedges (Policy E4). It is also important, for amenity and nature conservation reasons, to retain the connection between the open countryside and the "green corridor" of Woodham Burn and the adjacent school playing fields. The part appropriate for development is shown on the Proposals Map.

Acceptable uses for the remaining open land could include woodland or a small country park. A Regional Sports Council survey suggests a shortage of equestrian centres and as there are local bridleway links to this land, there would be a preference for the inclusion of some local equestrian facilities.

Proposals for the site in complying with the policy should be presented in a comprehensive manner and address the various requirements that are indicated. As part of this comprehensive planning scheme it is expected that the existing planning permission for large scale equestrian events will be voluntarily revoked. This, together with any other matters as appropriate, necessary to secure a comprehensive planning proposal for the site will be the subject of a planning agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding a planning application in conjunction with a planning agreement, as necessary.

POLICY H7 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT ELDON WHINS, NEWTON AYCLIFFE, WILL NOT COMMENCE UNTIL EITHER THE DEVELOPMENT AT COBBLERS HALL IS SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETE OR UNTIL 2003, WHICHEVER IS SOONER.**Reasons for the policy**

There is land in Newton Aycliffe with planning permission for 980 dwellings and the Plan allocates land for a further 495 dwellings. These sites provide a range and choice for developers and include some small sites close to the town centre as well as larger sites on the edge of the town.

A large proportion of land with planning permission in Newton Aycliffe is at Cobblers Hall (66.6 ha. and 800 dwellings). In order to ensure the planned development of the town this land will continue to be released by the Council over the Plan period.

In order to maintain the supply of available housing land it is considered that once a substantial number of houses, some 600 dwellings (75%) have been commenced at Cobblers Hall, development should be allowed to start on the Eldon Whins site. However, as housing development at Eldon Whins is expected to contribute to the total number of houses built in the Borough within the Plan period, development will be allowed to start within 10 years of the Plan's base date (i.e. 1st April 2003), even if 600 houses at Cobblers Hall have not been commenced.

The Eldon Whins site is adjacent to existing housing and to the Cobblers Hall area. The proposed development is well integrated into the urban form of the town and would be contained by woodland belts. The gap between the town and Middridge Village will be maintained. Improvements to Middridge Lane (C35) are proposed under Policy T8.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

Monitoring housing developments in Newton Aycliffe.

Housing Development in Villages

POLICY H8 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ON SITES WITHIN THE RESIDENTIAL FRAMEWORK OF THE FOLLOWING VILLAGES WILL NORMALLY BE APPROVED PROVIDED THAT THERE IS NO CONFLICT WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE PLAN'S ENVIRONMENTAL, OPEN SPACE OR DESIGN POLICIES:

**AYCLIFFE
BISHOP MIDDLEHAM
BYERS GREEN
CHILTON
CHILTON LANE
ELDON
FISHBURN**

**KIRK MERRINGTON
SEDFIELD
TRIMDON COLLIERY
TRIMDON GRANGE
TRIMDON VILLAGE
WEST CORNFORTH**

Reasons for the policy

The named villages are suitable places for housing development because they are large enough to support shops, a school and public transport links with other towns and villages. Development within the framework of these villages will support the strategy which is to balance the need for new housing while maintaining the character of the countryside.

The village of Eldon does not now include a shop or school and is unlikely to in the future, although the existing bus service between Shildon and Bishop Auckland should be secure. Despite this, the Council considers a residential framework is required in order to manage the physical regeneration of the village.

The purpose of defining "residential frameworks" is to identify areas where appropriately designed housing development would normally be approved. The frameworks take account of existing housing and sites with planning permission for housing and strong landscape features but generally exclude such uses as factories, schools and churches on the edge of villages.

Two principal criteria that have been used to define the residential framework of these small villages are:

- a clear physical boundary; and
- whether sites might integrate reasonably well with the scale and pattern of existing development.

The residential frameworks are defined on the Proposals Map.

Development that would cause the loss of areas of amenity value, including a loss of open space such as parks, green wedges, archaeological sites or natural features, such as streams or woodland, would be contrary to Policies L5 and E4, E10, E11, E12, E13 and E15, account should be taken of policies concerned with the design of new development (Policies D1 and D5) and advice contained within Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes.

New housing development in these villages will help to provide a choice of sites in different parts of the Borough and may encourage development in some villages where there has been little house-building in the recent past. This should assist in their revitalisation. In other villages the scope for new housing is more limited to permit the conservation of the attractive character of such villages.

Existing sites with planning permission for five or more dwellings in these villages are set out in Appendix 3.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY H9 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT THE LOCATIONS IN THE FOLLOWING VILLAGES WILL NORMALLY BE APPROVED:

LOCATION	AREA (HA)	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF DWELLINGS
HEIGHTINGTON STREET, AYCLIFFE VILLAGE	1.5	35
ADJACENT TO WEST END COTTAGE, BYERS GREEN	0.6	15
ADJACENT TO GREEN RISE, BYERS GREEN	1.7	40
FORD TERRACE, CHILTON	1.8	45
EAST OF ELDON BANK, ELDON	1.1	30
HALLGARTH, KIRK MERRINGTON	1.5	40
SOUTH VIEW ANNEX, SEDGEFIELD	1.3	60
ADJACENT TO THE LOCOMOTIVE, TRIMDON COLLIERY	1.2	30
BARRETT WAY, WEST CORNFORTH	1.6	15

Reasons for the policy

The sites lie within the residential framework of the villages named in Policy H8.

A number of sites have been allocated or already have planning permission in the villages of Fishburn and the Trimdons and with proposals in the Plan to improve the environment and economic prospects, house-building in these villages should be encouraged. In Sedgefield, sites are allocated that will allow for some houses to be built, while ensuring that the character of the village is not spoiled by too large an area of new housing. A further housing development opportunity is provided on the former Winterton Hospital Site, north of Sedgefield Village in the context of Policy L15. In each of the other villages named in Policy H8 there are sites allocated in the Plan or already with planning permission.

Collectively these sites provide a choice of locations throughout the Borough and will provide suitable sites to meet all sections of the local housing market, including plots for sale, low cost and executive housing.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

Releasing land through the Council's Housing Land Release Programme.

Providing advice to developers which could include the preparation of planning briefs.

POLICY H10 WITHIN THE FOLLOWING VILLAGES LIMITED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT WILL ONLY BE APPROVED PROVIDING THAT IT IS APPROPRIATE IN LOCATION, SCALE AND DESIGN TO THE CHARACTER OF THE SETTLEMENT AND THAT IT NORMALLY INVOLVES INFILLING, OR THE REDEVELOPMENT OR CONVERSION OF AN EXISTING BUILDING:

**BRADBURY
MAINSFORTH
MIDDRIDGE**

**MORDON
NORTH CLOSE
RUSHYFORD**

Reasons for the policy

These villages are too small to be suitable in principle for much more than limited housing development, for example, there are no schools or shops. They may, however, provide choice or alternative housing sites in the Borough. As these villages are small, new development needs to be controlled so as to maintain their character. To reinforce this, the central parts of Mainsforth, Middridge and Mordon are designated as conservation areas.

"Infilling" is the filling of small gaps within small groups of houses. Due to the size and character of these villages, the Council considers that it would normally be appropriate that such new development would involve no more than two dwellings. Even where a gap is small it must not be assumed that permission will be given because it may be desirable to leave the gap as an essential feature in the village scene, or to permit views of open countryside that contribute to the character of the village. The conversion or redevelopment of existing buildings may be allowed if the scheme is appropriate to the character of the village.

The villages to which this policy applies provide opportunities for only very limited development, through new development, redevelopment or conversions. Housing development is encouraged in larger towns and villages, close to local facilities in order to reduce the need to use private cars.

Housing that is essential for agricultural or forestry workers may be approved in the countryside in accordance with Policy H12.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

Housing Development in the Countryside

POLICY H11 THE EXTENSION, INFILLING OR REDEVELOPMENT OF RIBBONS OR OF SPORADIC GROUPS OF HOUSES OUTSIDE OF THE TOWNS AND VILLAGES LISTED IN POLICIES H1, H8 AND H10 WILL NOT NORMALLY BE APPROVED.

Reasons for the policy

Housing development should respect the environment and should make maximum use of existing urban sites and of land adjacent to urban areas in close proximity to a range of local facilities. New house-building in the countryside, away from established settlements, should be strictly controlled, so as to protect the countryside, both for its intrinsic value and for its importance in separating areas of urban development.

There are a limited number of places in the Borough that are formed of ribbons or sporadic groups of houses. These do not provide a suitable physical framework for new housing development, and if extended would erode the open nature of the countryside.

Housing that is essential for agriculture or forestry workers may be approved in the countryside in accordance with Policy H12.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY H12 NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE WILL NORMALLY BE APPROVED ONLY IF THE DWELLINGS ARE REQUIRED FOR OCCUPANCY BY PERSONS ENGAGED SOLELY OR MAINLY IN AGRICULTURE OR FORESTRY FOR WHOM IT IS ESSENTIAL TO LIVE IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THEIR PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO PERFORM THEIR DUTIES.

IN SUCH INSTANCES PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NORMALLY ONLY BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO AN OCCUPANCY CONDITION AND FOR SITES ADJACENT TO EXISTING BUILDINGS.

Reasons for the policy

The general presumption against new housing in the countryside is well established. Exceptions are made to meet special local circumstances where new housing is essential in order to run a viable agricultural or forestry business already located in the countryside.

In the event of the house no longer being required and an application being made for the removal of the occupancy condition, the Council will make an assessment of the need to retain the house for an agricultural or forestry worker in the area as a whole.

The Policy applies throughout the countryside areas of the Borough which comprise all of the rural area, including isolated groups and ribbons of houses outside the towns and villages listed in Policy H1, H8 and H10.

New housing development includes the substantial extension to an existing residential building (i.e. such as to fundamentally change the character of the building and to make it potentially capable of use as a separate dwelling unit). Further advice on the change of use buildings in the countryside to residential use is given in Policy H13.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications and, through conditions, ensuring that the dwellings are kept available for meeting the exceptional needs of agricultural or forestry employment.

In order to assess an application for a new dwelling, functional and financial tests will be applied by the Council, as set out in PPG7 - The Countryside and the Rural Economy. The Council may allow a permission for temporary accommodation on a site if the evidence supporting an application is inconclusive.

POLICY H13 THE CHANGE OF USE OF A BUILDING LOCATED IN THE COUNTRYSIDE TO A RESIDENTIAL USE WILL NORMALLY BE APPROVED ONLY IF:

- (A) MAJOR EXTENSIONS OR REBUILDING ARE NOT REQUIRED;
- (B) THERE IS NO HARMFUL EFFECT CAUSED BY TRAFFIC OR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ON THE CHARACTER OF THE LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE; AND
- (C) NO SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONAL DEMAND UPON THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC SERVICES WOULD RESULT.

WHERE THE BUILDING IS OF VISUAL, ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC IMPORTANCE THE CHARACTERISTICS THAT MAKE THE BUILDING WORTHY OF PRESERVATION SHOULD NORMALLY BE RETAINED.

Reasons for the policy

New housing in the countryside is strictly controlled and it is appropriate to apply similar principles to the conversion of existing rural buildings into a residential use.

There are buildings in the countryside that may no longer be needed for their existing or previous use or for some other reason, a change of use to residential may be a way of retaining the buildings. This does not apply to derelict buildings that would require a substantial reconstruction to bring them into use.

Where the building is an important feature in the landscape and is of architectural or historic importance, the changes to create modern, residential standards may involve too much alteration to the scale and character or loss to its architectural quality.

The change of use of a listed building or one located within a conservation area should be converted in accordance with Policies E18, E19 and E22 to ensure that its special characteristics are preserved or enhanced, and take into account advice contained in Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 1.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

Giving advice to developers.

Development within Existing Housing Areas

POLICY H14 THE MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE BOROUGH'S HOUSING STOCK AND ITS SETTING WILL BE ENCOURAGING AND ASSISTED BY:

- (A) GRANTING PLANNING PERMISSION THAT LEADS TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF HOUSING AREAS THROUGH THE REDEVELOPMENT, CONVERSION OR MODERNISATION OF BUILDINGS, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS, IMPROVEMENTS TO ACCESS, TRAFFIC CIRCULATION AND PARKING ARRANGEMENTS;**
- (B) CONTINUING TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THE COUNCIL'S OWN HOUSING STOCK; AND**
- (C) UNDERTAKING AREA INITIATIVES WITH PRIORITY GIVEN TO BESSEMER PARK, SPENNYMOOR, THE LABURNUM ROAD AREA, WEST CORNFORTH AND BERESFORD STREET, CHARLES STREET AND TOMLIN STREET, SHILDON.**

Reasons for the policy

Approximately one third of housing in the Borough is Council-owned (12,500 dwellings). The condition of the large majority of the Council housing stock meets modern standards but there are areas with particular problems associated with construction, design or materials.

The majority of privately owned and housing association stock also satisfies modern standards.

The Council is carrying out a Survey of Housing Conditions and this will help to define any areas where problems are concentrated and the future priority for housing improvements.

The Council can designate "housing renewal areas" that allow improvements to be made to houses and their surroundings, particularly where the majority of houses are unfit. Savings can be made by private home-owners and the Council through dealing with improvements on a large scale rather than on an individual basis.

The improvement of the Council's housing stock is a matter of priority. An example is the Tenant Led Improvement Programme which has as its objective the involvement of tenants in choice about the improvement of their own houses. This has proved to be popular. The Programme is being implemented across the Borough, involving some 300-350 properties per year.

The Council is promoting area initiatives. In the initial period of the Plan attention is being given to the regeneration of the Bessemer Park estate in Spennymoor under the Government's Estate Action Programme on a partnership basis with housing associations and the private sector. This Programme, over a four year period will involve measures to encourage new house building, diversification of tenure, improvement to the estate's layout and its environment and the refurbishment of existing housing, together with complementary action on housing management and employment and training schemes. Implementation of the scheme will contribute towards the Plan's strategy of promoting Spennymoor as a major centre for development and economic investment.

The second location for an area initiative is the Laburnum Road area, West Cornforth, which has been the subject of housing clearance activity. The remaining pre-1939 houses still have a high incidence of voids. The area has a very poor environmental quality. An area based study of housing and environmental improvements, coupled with some new build activity is proposed during the first part of the Plan period.

The area of pre-1939 houses in Beresford Street, Charles Street and Tomlin Street, New Shildon has also been identified for an area initiative. This is adjacent to land allocated in the Plan for housing at Redworth Road (Policy H2). Taken together these proposals will help to regenerate this part of New Shildon.

Further area initiatives will be developed during the Plan period, and included in the Council's annual Housing Investment Strategy and Programme. Areas to be looked at include Ferryhill Station/Chilton Lane and Eldon.

How it will be put into practice

Preparation by the Council of area based comprehensive housing and environmental improvement schemes.

Encouraging developers, public agencies and private householders to carry out improvement measures.

Consulting with local residents and Town and Parish Councils to discover which improvements are most needed and acceptable.

Considering the declaration of Housing Renewal Areas.

POLICY H15 EXTENSIONS TO DWELLINGS WILL NORMALLY BE APPROVED PROVIDED THE PROPOSALS ARE OF A SCALE AND DESIGN COMPATIBLE WITH THE PROPERTY AND THERE IS NO ADVERSE AFFECT ON:

- (A) THE AMENITY AND PRIVACY OF SURROUNDING PROPERTIES CONTRARY TO POLICY D5;**
- (B) THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE AREA; AND**
- (C) HIGHWAY SAFETY CONTRARY TO POLICY T7.**

Reasons for the policy

For some households, extending their present house is a method of creating accommodation that suits new demands with less cost and disturbance than moving house. However, extensions can materially affect the street scene and the relationships between dwellings.

An area's character can change over time when many small extensions occur and there is a gradual loss of open space, vegetation and an increase in traffic.

Extensions must maintain the Council's standards of privacy, lighting, car parking, open space and access. Advice on these aspects is given in the Design Chapter (see Policies D3 and D5).

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

Taking account of the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes on Extensions to Dwellings (Note 4), Parking Standards (Note 6) and Open Space (Note 7).

POLICY H16 PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NORMALLY BE GRANTED FOR AN EXTENSION TO THE FRONT ELEVATION OF A DWELLING ONLY WHERE:

- (A) IT DOES NOT PROJECT FORWARD OF THE BUILDING LINE;
- (B) IT IS ON AN ISOLATED DWELLING; OR
- (C) IT IS ON A DWELLING IN AN AREA WHERE THERE IS NO COMMON BUILDING LINE.

Reasons for the policy

It is generally accepted that there is a need to maintain an attractive appearance in those parts of a housing area that are visible to the public. Extensions to the front of dwellings need careful consideration to ensure that they do not detract from the overall appearance of the housing in the area or reduce the amount of open area or landscaping available.

Extensions to the front of dwellings should also comply with the criteria laid down in Policy H15 by being of an appropriate scale and design. The Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 4 includes advice on the design of extensions to dwellings.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY H17 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ON BACKLAND AND INFILL SITES SHOULD NORMALLY BE CONSISTENT WITH THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- (A) A SATISFACTORY MEANS OF ACCESS AND ADEQUATE PARKING PROVISION CAN BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY D3;
- (B) SATISFACTORY AMENITY AND PRIVACY FOR BOTH THE NEW DWELLING AND EXISTING ADJACENT DWELLINGS CAN BE ACHIEVED IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY D5; AND
- (C) THE DEVELOPMENT IS IN KEEPING WITH THE SCALE AND FORM OF ADJACENT DWELLINGS AND THE LOCAL SETTING OF THE SITE.

Reasons for the Policy

Backland development consists of the construction of housing on areas of land to the rear of the main frontage development. It includes "tandem" development which is where a dwelling is constructed in the garden of an existing dwelling and shares the same means of access. "Infilling" is the filling of small gaps within small groups of houses.

The suitability of a backland or infill site for housing development needs careful consideration. As most backland and infill sites are restricted in size, development will need to be carefully designed to ensure that they create living conditions to the standards required for housing development generally, without detracting from the amenity and privacy of the existing dwellings adjoining the site. New dwellings should be designed to relate well to the existing dwellings in the area, and to be compatible with the general character of the area. These aspects of development are covered in Policies D1, D3, D5, H1, H8, H10 and, in the case of locations in conservation areas, Policy E18, together with the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on the Layout of New Housing (Note 3), Conservation Areas (Note 1) and Parking Standards (Notes 6) as appropriate.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

POLICY H18 THE FOLLOWING USES WILL NORMALLY BE GRANTED PLANNING PERMISSION WITHIN HOUSING AREAS:

**RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS
SHOPS UP TO 100 SQ.M.
OFFICES
BUSINESS
DOCTORS'/DENTISTS' AND OTHER SURGERIES
OPEN SPACE
LEISURE AND RECREATION FACILITIES
PUBLIC HOUSES
COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

SUBJECT TO:

- (A) COMPLYING WITH OTHER POLICIES OF THE PLAN;**
- (B) NOT SIGNIFICANTLY HARMING THE LIVING CONDITIONS FOR NEARBY RESIDENTS; AND**
- (C) BEING APPROPRIATE IN SCALE TO THE CHARACTER OF THE HOUSING AREA.**

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS FOR USES OTHER THAN THOSE LISTED ABOVE WILL BE DECIDED TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE ABOVE CRITERIA.

Reasons for the policy

Housing areas are defined as those parts of the towns and villages where the predominant land use is housing.

The uses listed as being acceptable in housing areas are those that are compatible with where people live, provide services and facilities within walking distance of residents and may contribute towards local jobs. The criteria will ensure that new uses will not normally be allowed if they are of a scale or nature that would cause disturbance to local residents by increasing the level of traffic, noise or parking problems. Conditions applied to planning permission can be used to control development so as to make certain development acceptable in housing areas, for example, by controlling the hours of opening.

Developments that would be unacceptable are those that would cause noise, smell or air pollution; attract an increase in road traffic; are out of character, scale and design; or would harm living conditions for people living nearby. Further guidance is given on the location of shops, public houses, offices and industry in the relevant chapters.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

Providing advice to developers.

Housing for Particular Groups

POLICY H19 IN GRANTING CONSENT FOR DEVELOPMENT ON SITES IDENTIFIED IN POLICIES H2 AND H9 THE COUNCIL WILL ENCOURAGE DEVELOPERS TO PROVIDE AN APPROPRIATE VARIETY OF HOUSE TYPES AND SIZES, INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING WHERE A NEED IS DEMONSTRATED.

Reasons for the policy

The existing housing stock includes a large proportion owned by the Council and housing associations and also privately owned terraced property. The average value of houses is low as defined by the proportion in the lowest Council tax bands. There are, however, some places in the Borough where there is a shortage of houses for sale or rent which people on low incomes can afford. It is not possible to build new houses to sell for less than £40,000 and, therefore, new houses are out of reach of many residents.

The Borough Council's Housing Needs Survey will help to demonstrate where there is a shortage of low cost housing, starter homes, homes for the elderly or disabled people. This will need to take account of local differences in the housing stock and to the variety of social and economic factors relating to housing needs.

Sites allocated in the Plan for housing development offer opportunities for many different house types, both on small and large developments. The sites are capable of providing a full range of housing, from high quality, low density developments to smaller housing schemes designed to provide low cost and affordable housing accommodation.

How it will be put into practice

Discussing with developers how best to provide housing which can meet a wide range of needs, having regard to other factors such as location, size and market considerations. Making available, in suitable locations, land owned by the Council for residential development.

The Council will normally expect a number of affordable houses or low cost home ownership schemes to be included on sites of over 75 dwellings where a local need is demonstrated.

By taking account of the findings of the Council's Housing Needs Survey and the conclusions of any assessment undertaken by Town and Parish Councils.

Where a local need exists, the Council will ensure by controlling land in its ownership or negotiating with housing associations, that the housing provided is maintained available for future occupants within certain categories of need.

POLICY H20 THE BOROUGH COUNCIL IN GRANTING PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING SITES WILL SEEK TO ENCOURAGE THE PROVISION OF SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING BY:

- (A) **SEEKING THROUGH NEGOTIATION AND AGREEMENT WITH DEVELOPERS TO INCLUDE SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING ON SITES IDENTIFIED IN POLICIES H2 AND H9, SUBJECT TO SITE AND MARKET CONSIDERATIONS, AND**

(B) THE IDENTIFICATION AND RESERVATION OF SITES FOR SUCH PURPOSES.

WHERE A LOCAL NEED FOR SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING IS IDENTIFIED GROUND FLOOR ACCOMMODATION AND THAT WITH LIFT ACCESS SHOULD BE BUILT SO AS TO BE SUITABLE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.

Reasons for the policy

Special needs housing is required for those of all ages with disabilities and the elderly.

More housing built to meet the wheelchair standards or which can be easily adapted would give a choice to those with disabilities to remain in their own homes and enable individuals to live as independently as possible within the community.

The Council is concerned that people with disabilities and the elderly who requires specially designed houses should not live in separate housing complexes. For this reason, more specialised and wheelchair housing will be encouraged where a local need has been demonstrated.

The Council's existing stock includes houses for particular groups and these will continue to be maintained for these purposes. The Council will also release land for building houses for people with special needs where appropriate. Housing associations can provide and maintain housing for particular groups of people and ensure that successive occupants of the property are those with these particular needs. There is also scope to secure provision by negotiation with the developers of private housing.

How it will be put into practice

Discussing with developers how best to provide housing which can meet a wide range of needs.

Making available, in suitable locations, land owned by the Council.

Investigating with Durham County Council's Social Services Department and the Health Authority the local need for special needs housing.

POLICY H21 PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NORMALLY BE GRANTED FOR THE CREATION OF FLATS, BEDSITTERS AND THE MULTIPLE SHARING OF HOUSES PROVIDED THAT:

- (A) LIVING CONDITIONS ARE SATISFACTORY FOR OCCUPANTS OF THE ACCOMMODATION AND FOR THEIR NEIGHBOURS;**
- (B) THERE IS ADEQUATE OFF-STREET PARKING FOR THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE LIVING THERE IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY D3; AND**
- (C) THE HOUSE IS NOT LESS THAN 100 SQ.M. (GROSS) FLOOR AREA.**

Reason for the policy

Flats, bedsitters and shared houses are an important source of low-cost housing. There is likely to be an increase in the number of single people over the Plan period.

The quality of this accommodation needs to be regulated and houses below 100 sq.m. (gross) floor area are too small to be sub-divided satisfactorily.

It is important that this type of development does not disturb neighbours, for example from noise or car parking.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning applications.

Making adequate sound insulation a condition of planning permission where necessary.

Providing advice to developers, including the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on Parking Standards (Note 6).

POLICY H22 PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NORMALLY BE GRANTED FOR SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION, RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES AND NURSING HOMES WITHIN THE TOWNS OF NEWTON AYCLIFFE, SPENNYMOOR, FERRYHILL AND SHILDON AND WITHIN THE RESIDENTIAL FRAMEWORKS OF VILLAGES IDENTIFIED IN POLICY H8, PROVIDED THAT:

- (A) IT PROVIDES SATISFACTORY VEHICULAR ACCESS, PARKING, SERVICING AND AMENITY AREAS IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICIES D3 AND D5;**
- (B) THE DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE AMENITY OF NEARBY RESIDENTS; AND**
- (C) ITS LOCATION IS SUCH THAT NOISE AND DISTURBANCE FROM EXISTING SURROUNDING USES WOULD NOT BE DETRIMENTAL TO RESIDENTS.**

SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION AND RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES SHOULD NORMALLY BE LOCATED ON LEVEL SITES WITH EASY ACCESS TO SHOPPING FACILITIES, COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

Reasons for the policy

The Council supports "Care in the Community" initiatives which seek to integrate elderly people and those with mental or physical handicaps or disabilities within the local community.

Sheltered accommodation provides care for the elderly, usually with a resident warden, an emergency alarm system and some communal facilities.

Nursing homes are designed to give 24-hour nursing care for the elderly and others needing treatment, care and support.

Residential care homes provide personal care for the elderly and others who do not require 24 hour nursing care.

Sheltered accommodation and residential care homes should be planned to form part of the neighbourhood so that they become accepted and the residents are known in the community. The site and buildings must be attractive and blend in with surrounding properties.

Sheltered accommodation and residential care homes must have easy access to roads and public transport and to all the amenities of town or village life. Shops, post office, churches, clubs, community centres, and in the case of children's homes, schools should be within easy reach. Isolated premises are not likely to be suitable for this type of accommodation.

Conditions which deter residents from going out should be avoided, for example, sites near to busy or dangerous roads.

For all types of residential institutions, access, parking and servicing should be able to accommodate large vehicles such as mini-buses and ambulances. The Council's standards on car parking are contained in Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 6.

Access by public transport for visitors and staff in the case of all residential institutions, is important. Homes accommodating older residents or those with physical disabilities should be on a level site without steps or steep inclines.

The physical setting of residential institutions should be attractive. There should be a garden within the curtilage of the sheltered accommodation or residential care home, large enough to provide a landscaped and private area for residents to walk or sit in. The view from windows is important, particularly for the benefit of those with limited mobility.

How it will be put into practice

Deciding planning application.

Negotiating with developers and other agencies, including housing associations, the Health Authorities and Durham County Council.

POLICY H23 PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR PERMANENT, TEMPORARY OR TRANSIT ACCOMMODATION FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS PROVIDED THAT:

- (A) THE SITE CAN BE SUPPLIED WITH ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND IS WITHIN A REASONABLE DISTANCE OF LOCAL FACILITIES AND A PUBLIC TRANSPORT ROUTE;**
- (B) THE SCALE OF THE DEVELOPMENT WOULD NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE CHARACTER OF THE LANDSCAPE OR THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS;**
- (C) THERE IS A SATISFACTORY MEANS OF ACCESS IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY T7;**

- (D) THE SITE CAN BE LAID OUT TO PROVIDE SEPARATE AREAS FOR RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION, CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA, WORK, STORAGE AND PARKING AND BE ADEQUATELY SCREENED HAVING REGARD TO THE SAFETY AND PRIVACY OF OCCUPANTS AND VISITORS; AND**
- (E) THE DEVELOPMENT WOULD NOT INTRUDE INTO THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE NOR RESULT IN THE LOSS OF ANY AREA OF NATURE CONSERVATION, ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST OR A GREEN WEDGE CONTRARY TO POLICIES E4, E10, E11, E16 AND E17.**

Reasons for the policy

The Council manages an official 15 pitch site at East Howle. This meets current demands for local authority sites.

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act gives local authorities discretionary powers to provide gypsy sites and gypsies will, themselves, be able to make planning applications for private sites.

Gypsies need to live on sites that have services including electricity, drinking water, sewage disposal and are close to facilities such as shops and schools and are close to bus routes. Suitable sites would be located on unused land on the edge of towns and villages, but should not encroach onto open countryside or environmentally sensitive sites. The sites should be well-screened for privacy and amenity and the layout should provide safe areas for children to play, separated from areas for work, parking and storage.

There are different types of gypsy sites, permanent sites, with or without work areas, temporary sites and transit sites. In the latter cases it is still important that they are safe and do not have an unacceptable impact on the environment or local communities. Permanent sites should be properly landscaped so as to limit the impact of noise and visual intrusion on neighbouring uses. Sites may also be for 2 or 3 caravans, up to 15 or 20 pitches. Although small sites may be unobtrusive, they will not normally be allowed in the open countryside, in accordance with Policy H12.

How it will be put into practice

Liaising with the County Council's Gypsy Officer.

Determining planning applications.